

Banquet Speech

Tom (Fortunato) suggested I talk about families and philately. A good topic with lots of meat, but I will keep it brief as I've promised my wife time for rebuttal.

I am the son of a dedicated stamp collector father, and the grandfather of several little girls and boys who seem to be interested. So, over the course of my 65 years, I've had a chance to observe how stamp collecting fits into the life of the family. This evening I will share with you some reflections on the lessons I have learned.

1. I've learned that parents don't always agree on everything.....

Like when should Dad get to ignore the lawn, the roof, the vacuumingso he can play with stamps, what friends he should have over to play stamps with, how hard he should work to infect his children with the disease of Philately.

2. I've learned that you can't please all of the people all of the time. In fact sometimes you can't please any of the people at all.

There was the time when, as a highly enthusiastic 11 year old, attending my first stamp club meeting in New Delhi, India, I bid against my father for some Indian stamps to the absolute limit of my five Rupee allowance - just about a dollar at that time. I no longer remember what I won, but my father's silence on the way home should have given me some sort of hint (He was a master of the 'slow burn') , but no, I was just flushed with success. Only a few days later did my mother tell me that I had committed a major faux pas, and that he was upset.

3. I've learned that stamps can be a teenage communications bridge.

When as a teenager, it dawned on me that I knew everything and no longer needed to consult my parents for guidance and advice, nor were their offerings of same gracefully accepted, some level of communication with both was maintained through the medium of questions I had about stamp collecting. I was serious about it, and my friends were too. So, even my mother learned to ask, "Well, what country did you and Bob work on today, dear?" No telling what that opening might lead to.

4. I've learned that pleasing your parents entails more than being good at stamp collecting.

I was the kid in school who loved to sit near the window so I could daydream - often about what stamp project was afoot at home. I was the kid whose report card would say, "Johnny could be doing so much better if he applied himself". As you can imagine, that did not play well at home. As a result I learned the power of concentration, the ability to focus on a task that was not stamp collecting. I might mention that this is still sometimes a challenge!

5. I've learned that the one you choose to spend your life with may be a great match, but not a perfect match.

I was a stamp collector who spent a lot of time on the hobby. My wife was not a stamp collector and showed no particular interest. Both of us, I think, got married thinking we would change the other. It didn't happen -- though we both gave it our best shot. I gave up first. She is still working at it.

6. I've learned that it is not good to brag.

In the early years of our marriage, we had four children in 6 years. To say that we ate a lot of peanut

butter and bananas overstates the hardship level, but my wife was a whiz with coupons, and I did not spend more than about \$2 on any given philatelic purchase for a lot of years. But as promotions came at work, and I began writing for Linn's, I had more to spend, and was fortunate in what I spent it on. Of course, I could not keep my mouth shut, and would periodically boast of the increasing value of my collection. A day came when we needed cold cash for some essential, and my wife said, "Sell the stamps!" I won't burden you with the discussion that followed, but I did sell some stamps – and though I rarely brag now, "Sell the stamps" is still a phrase heard in our home.

7. I've learned that sometimes you fail as a parent.

We have one collector among our children. And he collects sports cards and memorabilia with fully as much fervor as I collect stamps. All four kids took a fling at stamp collecting. Three actually did exhibits. All of them went to stamp shows with me, and met some of my strange philatelic friends, who they still ask about. But none became lifelong philatelists. They have succeeded in life in virtually every other way, but it still causes me a little heartburn that they have not delved into our hobby. Perhaps when they get older, one will return to it – as has been the pattern with so many collectors. Hope springs eternal.....

8. I've learned that grandchildren like stamps and enjoy connecting to grandpa through playing with them.

We now have ten grandchildren, up to age 14, and more than half are receptive to stamp collecting. The others are age two and below. The older ones happily accept stamps as gifts, work on projects with me, use stamps in art and school projects, and generally humor the old guy by being receptive to the hobby. Will I succeed here where I failed with my own children? I hope to keep trying and to live long enough to find out.

These are just some observations from my perspective. The hobby has been good to me, and mostly a positive in the family context. So, let me end with a thank you to my wife, and to all the other spouses and children here who show superhuman forbearance in letting us collectors pursue our stamp collecting passion. Thank you!

I now have a presentation to make. Would like to have the following people come forward. (names)

Many of you will have figured out that these fine people are all APS accredited philatelic judges. There are about 120 of us nationwide. Each is an active exhibitor who has graduated from a rigorous training program for apprentice judges; designed to test our skills as an evaluator, and as a guide and mentor to other exhibitors.

Given that some exhibitors don't get the awards they think they should get, it should be no surprise that not all judges are universally loved.

Still, they perform a valuable service to the hobby, and the Committee on the Accreditation of National Exhibitions and Judges wanted to recognize them, and help the hobby to recognize them, by providing an APS Judge pin.

I'm a former chairman of Committee, and on behalf of Steve Reinhard, the current chairman, I'd like to present each of these judges with a pin. We hope you will wear it with pride.